SIXTH EDITION

SCHOOLS and SOCIETY

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION

JEANNE H. BALLANTINE
JOAN Z. SPADE
JENNY M. STUBER

Schools and Society

Sixth Edition

To the next generation, our grandchildren, Cosette, Chloe, Joseph, Daniel, Corinne, Hannah, Caleb, Kai, and Ayla Brynn

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A Sociological Approach to Education

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Editors

Jeanne H. Ballantine

Wright State University

Joan Z. Spade

The College at Brockport, State University of New York

Jenny M. Stuber

University of North Florida

SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

FOR INFORMATION:

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Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

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Preface

The challenge we struggled with as we selected material for this book was how to present sociology of education to students in a way that contains both a synopsis and a balanced picture of a complex field. As a result, we created this text to provide students with an overview of the scope, perspectives, and issues in the sociology of education. We drew on our many years of experience in researching, publishing, and teaching sociology of education. Our goal was to involve students by presenting well-rounded and provocative summaries of major areas in the field. Individual readings include a combination of classical foundations in the field, noted contemporary authors, and current issues most often discussed by instructors. The most frequently taught topics, according to survey data, are stratification, the social context of education, schools as organizations, and diversity in education (American Sociological Association, 2004). Issues related to these topics are addressed throughout the book.

Schools and Society is designed to appeal to both graduate and upper-level undergraduate students. The text is divided into 11 chapters that begin with introductions outlining issues in the topic area and summarizing how the readings that follow fit into the topic areas. The readings, written by leading scholars, are presented within a systematic framework that provides an overview of the field. These readings introduce major theoretical perspectives and include classic studies, current issues, and applications of knowledge to particular educational problems. Although this book is not about educational policy per se, many of the readings have practical and policy implications for education.

To accomplish the goal of presenting a comprehensive and theoretically balanced overview of the field, we selected readings that

1. illustrate major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and the complexity of education, including how to study it and how it has been studied;
2. blend classic studies with newer, sometimes controversial topics;
3. apply to students who are likely to take the course in various majors—sociology, education, and others;
4. exhibit writing at a level of sophistication appropriate to students in advanced undergraduate or graduate courses;
5. concentrate on materials drawn from a wide range of sources, including books, journals, scientific studies and reports, and commentaries; and

6. use the open systems approach to provide a framework for an overview of the field and analysis of a disparate group of topics.

The readings selected were tested for readability and interest level with graduate and undergraduate students. Those readings included were seen as useful and important contributions to understanding the field. Changes were made in both selections and the introductions to the readings as a result of students' comments. Each chapter begins with an introduction to show the interrelationships between the various issues in education. Each reading is preceded by introductory remarks and questions to guide students to key aspects of the reading and to tie it to other readings.

New to This Edition

The sixth edition of *Schools and Society* introduces 24 new readings, plus revisions of five readings original to this book. Several of the new readings tap important issues in education today, including school funding, gender issues in schools, parent and neighborhood influences on learning, growing inequality in schools, and charter schools. Chapters were reorganized to better portray the new materials in each section of the book, and some readings from the previous edition were moved to new chapters to reflect the new organizational structure. This reader can be used alone, with a text, or with other readings or monographs. The readings included are appropriate for a variety of courses focusing on the study of education, such as sociology of education, social foundations of education, social contexts of education, and the like. This book may be used in departments of sociology, education, social sciences, or others as appropriate.

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Reference

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About the Editors

The original editors, Jeanne Ballantine and Joan Spade, have known each other for many years through their involvement in the American Sociological Association (ASA) and Sociology of Education Section activities. This project started when Joan asked if Jeanne planned to update her reader. Thus, a collaboration began with the two meeting in hotel rooms at conferences and visiting each other to develop and conceptualize this anthology. This collaboration continues with the publication of the sixth edition and the addition of a new collaborator, Jenny Stuber, who brings a background of writing and research, especially in higher education and inequality.

Jeanne H. Ballantine is professor emerita of sociology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. She received an MA from Columbia University and a PhD from Indiana University, with a specialty in sociology of education. She has been teaching and writing for more than 35 years and has written or coauthored several texts, including *Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis*, *Teaching Sociology of Education*, *Sociological Footprints*, and *Our Social World: Introduction to Sociology*. She has also taught and published in other areas, including gender, global social issues, and teaching of sociology, and has been an active member of sociology of education organizations, including the ASA Section on Sociology of Education, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the International Sociological Association (ISA) Research Committee on Sociology of Education. She has won numerous awards, including the ASA Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award.

Joan Z. Spade is professor emerita of sociology at The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in Brockport, New York. She received her MA from the University of Rochester and her PhD from the University of Buffalo. She has been teaching and writing in the field for more than 30 years, including a semester teaching in Budapest, Hungary, as a Fulbright Scholar; she is coeditor of *Implementing Educational Reform: Sociological Perspectives on Educational Policy* and coauthor of articles in sociology of education on stratification and grouping practices in education. She publishes in other areas, including gender and family, and is coeditor, with Catherine G. Valentine, of *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities*. She is a member of the ASA, including the ASA Section on Sociology of Education, the Eastern Sociological Society, and Sociologists for Women in Society.

Jenny M. Stuber is an associate professor of sociology at the University of North Florida. Her research focuses on social class inequality, especially in terms of how people understand and enact it within social institutions. Her book, *Inside the College Gates: How Class and Culture Matter in Higher Education* (Lexington), explores how the reproduction of class inequalities takes place within higher

education's social and extracurricular domains. Currently, she is working on an ethnographic project in Aspen, Colorado, examining how middle-class residents respond to and resist the growing class inequality within their community. In addition to two textbooks—*Exploring Inequality* (Oxford University Press) and *The Sociology of Education* (Routledge), the latter coauthored with Jeanne Ballantine and Floyd Hammock—her research has also appeared in numerous academic journals. A dedicated instructor, her teaching focuses on social inequality, research methods, and annual study abroad trips to Iceland.

Introduction

Schooling is ubiquitous in the world, making education a major institution in societies. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any developed or developing society without a system of schools, from preschool to graduate level. Sociologists who study education examine schools from a variety of perspectives. The readings in this book introduce the primary sociological perspectives on educational systems and survey major issues in the field. The following illustrates some topics and questions addressed by sociologists of education:

What theories and research methods do sociologists of education use to obtain information? (Chapters 1 and 2)

What external social pressures and organizations affect the way we teach our children? (Chapter 3)

In what ways do the informal relationships and expectations in schools affect what happens in schools, including student learning, the development of identities, and the distribution of power? (Chapter 4)

What are roles and responsibilities of school administrators, teachers, and students? How do these roles and responsibilities intersect, and how do they sometimes come into conflict? (Chapter 5)

How is the knowledge that we teach our children constructed and selected for our schools? (Chapter 6)

How do students' race, social class, and gender affect their school experiences and reflect systems of inequality in society? (Chapters 7 and 8)

How is higher education organized, and how has that system evolved over time? What is the purpose of higher education, and how are students shaped by the college experience? (Chapter 9)

How does the educational system in the United States compare with those in other countries? (Chapter 10)

What factors bring about changes in societies' schools and schooling? What kinds of conflicts exist in trying to affect school reform, and what additional possibilities exist? (Chapter 11)

We address these and many other questions by providing an overview of major theoretical perspectives in Chapter 1 and end by considering change and reform of educational institutions in Chapter 11.

Throughout this book, readings look at how schools work, how they affect students and society, and how they might work differently. We look at the current condition of education and consider educational change and policy issues, all of which help us to understand the complex matrix of relationships and activities within schools. We hope this knowledge about educational issues will help you make more effective decisions as students, parents, taxpayers, and perhaps educators. After reading this book, you should have gained some understanding of the fields of sociology and education, what both fields contribute to the study of educational systems, and some specific educational issues of concern to sociologists and education professionals.

What Can Sociologists Tell Us About Education?

Sociological analyses of education give us a deeper understanding of the form and purpose of education in a society and the interactions of people within educational organizations. Sociologists study structures and organizations of social systems, including education, family, religion, economics, politics, and health. These social institutions, including education, constitute the major structural components of any society. Sociologists of education focus on the institution of education and the structure, processes, and interaction patterns within it. They also consider the surrounding context of the educational system, including other institutions that influence the education our children receive. These aspects of education vary greatly across societies. In some societies, children learn their proper roles primarily by observing elders and imitating or modeling adult behavior. In other societies, children attend formal schools from a young age and learn the skills and knowledge needed for survival within the school and societal context.

Education and other institutions are interdependent in a society. Change in one brings change in others. For instance, a family's attitudes toward education will affect the child's school experience, as you will read in this book. Therefore, the sociological analysis of education is different from the approach taken by many people in society because sociologists begin by looking at the larger picture of society and the role that education plays in society rather than on individuals in that system. As a result, studies of change in educational systems are more likely to be based in structural rather than personal factors.

The Educational System

The analysis of educational systems falls into two main areas: process and structure. At whatever level of analysis we study the educational system of a society, processes are at work. These are the action parts of the system, bringing the structure alive. Examples of processes include teaching, learning, communication, and decision making, as well as those formal and informal activities that socialize students into their places in school and later life roles. These are the dynamic parts of the educational system.

However, we cannot ignore the structure of a system, including the hierarchy or roles people play—administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and, of course, students—as well as the organization of learning—classroom and school layout, types of schools, and structure of curriculum. Nor can we ignore the school's environment, which consists of groups, organizations, other institutions, and even the global society outside the school, all of which influence school functioning. For instance, politicians

and other powerful people in society may put pressure on schools to select particular books (Chapter 6), communities may provide unequal academic opportunities to different groups of students (Chapter 7), and the federal and state political and economic structures shape policies and resources available to schools (Chapters 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11). In short, no school exists in a vacuum. This open systems perspective is the uniting theme in this book.

The Open Systems Perspective

The open systems perspective looks at the educational system as a whole, integrated, dynamic entity. Unfortunately, most research studies focus on only parts of the whole system, and most theoretical perspectives have biases or limitations by focusing on one part. An open systems perspective is not a panacea for all of the problems we face when trying to get the total picture, but this perspective can help us conceptualize a whole system and understand how the small pieces fit together into a working unity. The open systems perspective provides a useful way of visualizing many elements in the system; it helps to order observations and data and represents a generalized picture of complex interacting elements and sets of relationships. The perspective modeled in Figure I.1 refers to no one particular organization or theoretical perspective but rather to the common characteristics of many educational settings.

Although this figure lists the component parts of a total system, it does not imply that one theory is better than another for explaining situations or events in the system. Neither does it suggest the best methodology to use in studying the system. The figure does allow you to visualize the parts you will read about in this book and help you to see where they fit and what relationship they bear to the system as a whole.

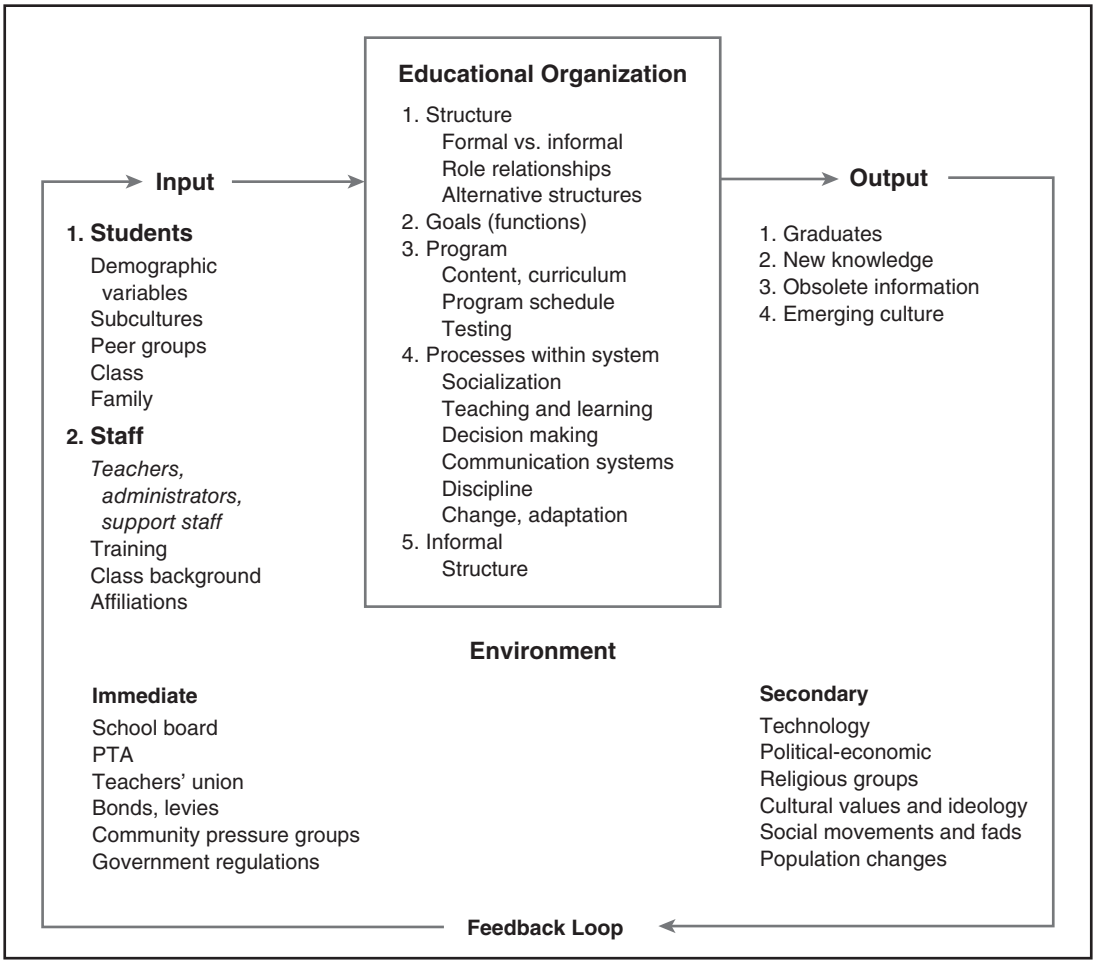
Figure I.1 shows the basic components or processes in any social system. These components are the organization, the environment, input, output, and feedback. In the following sections, we briefly discuss each of these parts as it relates to the educational system.

Step 1: Organization

Focus your attention on the center box, the organization. This refers to the center of activity and is generally the central concern for the researcher. This box can represent a society (such as the United States), an institution (such as the public education system), an organization (such as a particular school), a subsystem (such as a classroom), or an interaction (such as between teachers and students or between peers). For purposes of discussion, we shall refer to this as *the organization*. It is in the organization that many activities related to education take place, illustrating that the organization is more than structure, positions, roles, and functions. Within the organizational boundaries is a structure consisting of parts and subparts, positions and roles. Although we speak of the organization as though it were a living entity, we are really referring to the personnel who carry out the activities of the organization and make decisions about organizational action. The patterns of processes in the system bring the organization alive. Decision making and formulation of rules by key personnel, communication between members of the organization, socialization into positions in the organization, teaching in the classroom—these are among the many patterns of activities that are constantly taking place.

These patterns of processes do not take place in a vacuum. The decision makers holding positions and carrying out roles in the organization are constantly responding to demands from both inside and

Figure I.1 Open Systems Approach to Education



Note: From Ballantine, J. H., Hammack, F. M., & Stuber, J. (2017). *The sociology of education: A systematic approach* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. Copyright 2017 by Taylor & Francis.

outside the organization. For example, the principal of a school must respond to many different constituencies, including federal, state, and local agencies; district personnel; parents; teachers; students; and even neighbors who live near the school. The boundaries of the organization are not solid but rather remain flexible and pliable in most systems to allow the system to respond to its environment. We call this *open boundaries*, or an open system.

Capturing the relationships in the school can tell us as much about its functioning as observing formal roles and structure. For example, students' experiences depend on their social class backgrounds, the responses of school staff to their behavior within schools, and the actions of students and staff that create school cultures.

Step 2: Environment

An open system implies that there is interaction between the patterns within the organizations and the environments outside the organizations. The environment refers to everything that surrounds the organization and influences it in some way. Typically the environment includes other surrounding systems. For schools, an important aspect of the environment is financial—where they get their money. What rules are imposed on schools is another critical factor, as schools exist within a maze of social, political, and legal expectations, such as the recent Race to the Top legislation. Another is the employment market and job skills needed at a particular time. For each school organization, the crucial factors in its environment will differ and change over time. Another important factor in the environment is family and particularly the financial and other support families provide to schools and their children through their social class background. As described throughout the book—but particularly in Chapters 7 and 8—the social class context surrounding children has a strong influence on their academic achievement.

Organizations depend on their environments to meet many of their resource requirements and to obtain information. Every school and school district faces a different set of challenges from its environment. There are many necessary and desired interactions with the environment, and some that are not so pleasant. The interaction of the school with the environment takes place in our systems model in the form of input and output.

Step 3: Input

The organization receives input from the environment in such forms as information (including textbooks and classroom materials), raw materials, personnel, finances, and new ideas. Furthermore, persons who are members of the organization are also part of surrounding communities and bring into the organization influences from the environment.

Some environmental inputs are mandatory for the organization's survival; others vary in degree of importance. For most organizations, some inputs are undesirable but unavoidable: new legal restrictions, competition, or financial pressures. The organization can exert some control over inputs. For instance, schools have selection processes for new teachers, textbooks, and other curricular materials. Schools have less control over other inputs, such as which students they serve. Certain positions in the organization are held by personnel who act as buffers between the organization and its environment. For example, the secretary who answers the phone has a major controlling function and so too, in a very different manner, does the principal of a school.

Step 4: Output

Output refers to the material items and the nonmaterial ideas that leave the organization, such elements as completed products, wastes, information, evolving culture, and new technology. There may be personnel who bridge the gap between organizations and their environment. Personnel with responsibility for selling the organization's product serve this function, whether they work in a placement office for college graduates or in the central administrative offices of a school district creating newsletters and funding solicitations for local taxpayers and others.

The normal production of new knowledge in colleges and universities in the form of research papers and articles represents output from these educational institutions. As you will read in Chapter 6, despite the view that knowledge is produced within a well-organized structure, the process of producing knowledge is highly political and embedded within social relationships.

Step 5: Feedback

A key aspect of an open systems model is the process of feedback. This process implies that an organization's leaders are constantly learning about and adapting to changes and demands in the environment as a result of news they receive. For instance, the organizational personnel compare the current state of affairs with desired goals and environmental feedback to determine new courses of action. The feedback may be positive or negative, requiring differing responses. Top administrators of our educational institutions are, in many ways, managers of this system of feedback.

Organization of the Book

The open systems perspective described previously and in Figure I.1 can serve us in many ways. Not only does it provide an organizing framework for this book, but this perspective can also help to promote interdisciplinary study, as illustrated in many readings in this book. As Marvin Olsen (1978) has said,

> It is not a particular kind of social organization. It is an analytical model that can be applied to any instance of the process of social organization, from families to nation. . . . Nor is [it] a substantive theory—though it is sometimes spoken of as a theory in sociological literature. This model is a highly general, content-free conceptual framework within which any number of different substantive theories of social organization can be constructed. (p. 228)

A discussion of the fields of education and sociology must include numerous related fields: economics and school financing; political science, power, and policy issues; the family and child; church–state relationships; health and medical care for children; humanities and the arts; and the school's role in early childhood training, among others.

We structured this book to embrace the complexity of education, in terms of both what is studied and how it is studied, within the open systems perspective. Each chapter in the book focuses on illuminating aspects of the open systems perspective and contributing to an overview of educational systems. In selecting readings for the book, we sought to blend theory and classical readings with recent studies and current issues to provide background for current arguments, as well as an understanding of new directions in sociology of education. Though we focus primarily on research within sociology of education, we also include relevant readings from other areas. The readings herein represent a broad range of topics in the field; however, an attempt to cover all areas is not possible because the topic of education is multifaceted and very complex. When we leave out topics, we try to address them briefly in the chapter introductions.

For each chapter, we provide an introduction to both the area of education being covered and the research in that area. Each reading also includes an introduction and questions for you to consider as

you read. We encourage you to read individual chapters within the whole as exemplified by the open systems perspective presented in this introduction.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of major classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives used to understand educational systems—from functionalism to branches of conflict and interaction theory. These theoretical perspectives provide different explanations for why schools operate the way they do. This chapter provides the frameworks that are used to understand how schools work and to explain why things are as they are in schools.

Chapter 2 illustrates the relationship between theory and methods in sociology of education and provides examples of different methodological approaches. These approaches cover issues from micro-level to macro-level analyses, from interaction between individuals to examinations of global systems. Readings discuss qualitative and quantitative approaches to understanding educational systems.

Chapter 3 moves to the environment, the larger context within which the educational system operates. The environment can influence the educational system through control of finances, law, public opinion, and attitudes toward schools. The readings focus on neighborhoods, families, and finances as examples of school environmental influences.

Chapter 4 focuses on schools and educational systems as organizations, including the formal and informal aspects of schools. This is Step 1 in the open systems model: what goes on within the educational organization. The readings provide a sample of the rich literature on formal and informal organizations and structures.

Chapter 5 also focuses inside the educational organization but on the roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, and students. The readings illustrate several methods of research, including survey research, use of large data sets, and ethnography.

Chapter 6 considers what knowledge is presented in schools and how that knowledge is selected. These readings illustrate how the processes of determining curricula are affected by the cultural and environmental factors external to schools.

Chapter 7 delves into a key process in schools and societies—stratification by race, class, and gender. Readings explore how the stratification process in the larger society shapes the inputs and outputs, as well as educational organizations themselves. This chapter examines inequalities of social stratification in schools and school-related relationships that contribute to the stratification system.

Chapter 8 looks at programs and policies established to bring equality and equity into educational systems. The attempts at equality and equity include laws, changes in school structures, and attempts to override the dynamics of inequality in society. However, as you will read, these efforts toward equality are not always successful. This chapter explores both the development of the reform efforts and the consequences.

Chapter 9 considers the top tier of the educational system—higher education. The readings illustrate how this part of the educational system also includes both formal and informal structures and is reflected in the larger environment. Again, issues of inequality are addressed, both historically and in current contexts, as we consider the role of higher education in the United States and globally.

Chapter 10 illustrates that educational systems around the world are interrelated through the needs of the global community. Aspects of educational systems around the world are becoming increasingly similar. However, features of local and national environments also influence curricula, testing, and preparation of young people for their roles in a complex world.

Chapter 11 considers how educational systems change and may change in the future. It is important to understand how educational systems work. It is also important to understand why alternatives to current educational systems are difficult to design and implement.

As you read about the different parts of educational systems in this book, we hope you develop a deeper understanding of the role of education both in your life and in the society as a whole.

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CHAPTER 1
What Is Sociology of Education?

Theoretical Perspectives

A whole new perspective on schools and education lies in the study of sociology of education. How sociologists understand education can contribute to informed decision making and change in educational institutions. Sociologists of education focus on *interactions* between people, *structures* that provide recurring organizations, and *processes* that bring the structures such as schools alive through teaching, learning, and communicating. As one of the major structural parts, or *institutions*, in society, education is a topic of interest to many sociologists. Some work in university departments teaching sociology or education, others work in government agencies, and still others do research and advise school administrators. Whatever their role, sociologists of education provide valuable insights into the interactions, structures, and processes of educational systems. Sociologists of education examine many parts of educational systems, from interactions, classroom dynamics, and peer groups to school organizations and national and international systems of education.

Consider some of the following questions of interest to sociologists of education: What classroom and school settings are best for learning? How do peers affect children's achievement and ambitions? What classroom structures are most effective for children from different backgrounds? How do schools reflect the neighborhoods in which they are located? Does education "reproduce" the social class of students, and what effect does this have on children's futures? What is the relationship between education, religion, and political systems? How does access to technology affect students' learning and preparation for the future? How do nations compare on international educational tests? Is there a global curriculum? These are just a sampling of the many questions that make up the broad mandate for sociology of education, and it is a fascinating one. Sociologists place the study of education in a larger framework of interconnected institutions found in every society, including family, religion, politics, economics, and health, in addition to education. In this chapter, we examine the basic building blocks for a sociological inquiry into education and the theories that are used to frame ways of thinking about education in society (Ballantine, Hammack, and Stuber, 2017).

With a focus on studying people in groups, sociologists study a range of topics about educational systems. Chapters in this book focus on how sociologists study schools; the environment surrounding schools; the organization of schools and education; the roles people play in schools (teachers, students, administrators, and others); what we teach in schools; processes that take place in schools, including those that result in unequal outcomes for students; how different racial/ethnic groups, genders, and social class backgrounds of students can affect educational outcomes; the system of higher education; national and international comparisons of learning and achievement in different regions and countries; and educational reform. No other discipline has the broad approach and understanding provided by sociology of education.

Theories

Sociologists of education start with perspectives or *theories* that provide a framework to search for knowledge about education systems. Theories are attempts to explain and predict patterns and practices between individuals and in social systems—in this case, educational systems. Theories are carefully structured explanations or arguments that are applied to real-life situations. Since theories are not descriptions of what is happening in schools but only carefully thought-out explanations of why things happen, we can apply more than one theory to explain educational phenomena. An understanding of several theoretical approaches gives us different ways of thinking about educational systems. Theories guide research and policy formation in the sociology of education and provide logical explanations for why things happen as they do, helping to explain, predict, and generalize about issues related to schools. It is from the theories and the resulting research that sociologists of education come to understand educational systems. This chapter provides an overview of sociological theories as they are related to sociology of education, followed by classical and contemporary readings on the major theories. These theories also appear in readings throughout the book.

Following the open systems model discussed in the Introduction enables us to visualize the school system and its relationships with other organizations in its social context, or environment. By visualizing the dynamics inside a school, we can use theories to explain various situations within schools, such as the roles individuals play in schools and interactions between administrators, teachers, students, and other staff; equal opportunity within individual school organizations; social class dynamics as played out between peers in schools; formal and informal dynamics within schools; and the organization of school systems.

What You Will Find in Chapter 1

The purpose of the first chapter is to introduce you to the sociology of education through some key perspectives and theories in the field. The first reading discusses the relationship between sociology and education, why it is useful to study the sociology of education, who has a stake in educational systems and why they are likely interested in the field, and questions asked by sociologists of education. The second reading, by the book's editors Jeanne Ballantine and Joan Spade, outlines early theories in sociology of education and how they have influenced contemporary theories and theorists. This provides an introduction to the remaining readings, which include original works in various theories of sociology of education.

Current sociological theories have a long history in sociological thought, flowing from the early works of Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. The excerpts included in this chapter build upon their early ideas in attempting to understand the social world from the perspective of the "new" discipline of sociology in the early 1800s. Durkheim's study of the impact of the social system on maintaining order in society is considered the basis for functional theory.

The third reading provides a classical excerpt from Émile Durkheim, generally considered to be the first sociologist to write extensively about education. As a French professor of pedagogy at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, he used sociology to study education, a field in which he wrote and lectured for much of his career, until his death in 1917. Durkheim defined the field of sociology of education and

contributed to its early content. He was particularly concerned with the functions or purposes of education for society, the relationship between education and social change, the role of education in preparing young people to adhere to societal norms, and the social system that develops in classrooms and schools. In the reading in this chapter, Durkheim discusses the role that schools play in socializing the young. *Moral Education*, the focus of Durkheim's excerpt here, and his other works in sociology of education helped lay the foundation for more recent functional theorists. Functions are at the root of discussions of education; you will see them reflected in readings throughout the book. Sociologists using the functional perspective see the survival of society at stake—if a society fails to train its members in the skills and knowledge necessary for perpetuating that society, order and social control will be compromised. Durkheim and other functionalists were concerned with how educational systems work in conjunction with other parts of society to create a smooth-running social system.

Historically, the second major theoretical perspective to develop was conflict theory. It became a dominant theory in response to functional theory's focus on the need to preserve stability in society, sometimes at a cost to disadvantaged groups in society. Conflict theorists ask how schools contribute to unequal educational outcomes and distribution of people in stratification systems (such as social classes). A major issue for sociologists of education in the conflict tradition is the role education plays in maintaining the prestige, power, and economic and social position of the dominant groups in society. They contend that more powerful members of society maintain the most powerful positions in society, and the less powerful groups (often women, disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, and lower social classes) are "allocated" to lower ranks.

Karl Marx and Max Weber set the stage for contemporary conflict theories, and the reading in this chapter by Randall Collins (1971) provides an example of this perspective applied to education. Classical conflict theorists argue that those who dominate capitalist economic systems also control other institutions in society, such as education. Capitalists use these institutions to maintain power and enhance their own profits, although not without resistance by some students and community groups. Collins also provides an overview of another approach to conflict theory, discussing the use of Weber's concept of "status groups." Weber points out the strong relationship between students' social class origins, their preparation in school, and the jobs they move into after school. Weber argued that schools teach and maintain particular "status cultures"—that is, groups in society with similar interests and positions in the status hierarchy. Located in neighborhoods, schools are often rather homogeneous in their student bodies and teach to the local constituency, thus perpetuating status cultures in neighborhoods and communities.

David Swartz describes a fairly recent branch of conflict theory: "social reproduction." It is based on the question of whether schools help reproduce students' social class by treating students differently based on their class background or other distinguishing factors. Reproduction theorists explore such questions as whether "working-class" students are destined to become working-class adults, and the role schools play in the process. The concept of "cultural capital" (and social and economic capital) focuses, in part, on micro-level issues such as individual student's language patterns and background cultural experiences. Swartz gives an overview of this branch of conflict theory.

Functional and conflict theorists have been debating how to explain what happens in schools since Marx, Weber, and Durkheim's times. Each function of education (discussed in the second reading) has generated controversy. For example, functionalists argue that schools prepare young members of society for their adult roles, thus allowing for the smooth functioning of society, whereas conflict theorists

counter that the powerful members of society control access to the best educations, thus preparing only their children for the highest positions in society and retaining their positions of power.

The third major theoretical perspective in sociology of education is interaction theory, a micro-level theory that focuses on individual and small-group experiences in the educational system: the processes and interactions that take place in schools. In *interaction* or *interpretive theory*, individuals are active players in shaping their experiences and cultures and not merely shaped by societal forces. By studying the way participants in the process of schooling construct their realities, researchers can better understand the meaning of education for participants. The final reading by Ray Rist (1977) comes from the interaction theory tradition, and it focuses on *labeling theory*.

One important factor in the teaching and learning process is what teachers come to expect from their students. The concept of *self-fulfilling prophecy* applied to the classroom was made famous by Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) book *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. They studied how teachers form judgments about their students and *label* them based on objective but also subjective factors, such as social class, appearance, and language patterns. The reading by Rist argues that utilizing labeling theory, and an outcome of labeling called the *self-fulfilling prophecy*, helps us to understand school processes from the standpoint of both teachers and students.

As you read about the theories presented in this chapter, try to picture the open systems perspective (discussed in the Introduction) with its many parts, activities, participants, structures, contexts or environments, and processes such as conflict. These readings provide an overview and examples of theoretical perspectives that will help you to understand the education system, interrelationships between parts, and many of the readings in the book that use these theories. In the following chapters, other parts of the open systems model are examined. Some readings take an institutional perspective, looking at how social structure affects the institution of education; others take a more micro-level focus on individuals, classrooms, and interactions in schools. All can be placed in the educational context of the open systems model, and all can be better understood with knowledge of the theories that are discussed in this chapter.

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READING 1

Sociology of Education

A Unique Perspective for Understanding Schools

Jeanne H. Ballantine and Floyd M. Hammack

For many readers, sociology of education is a new field of inquiry. It provides new perspectives on education for future teachers and administrators, parents, students, and policy makers. These first two articles lay the groundwork for understanding the importance of the sociological perspective and theories in researching schools and effective teaching and learning strategies. This reading focuses specifically on what sociologists of education study and how such research is useful in understanding schools in our society.

Questions to consider for this reading:

1. What can sociology contribute to our understanding of education?
2. Who can benefit from studying the sociology of education, and how?
3. What are some topics of importance to sociologists of education?

Education is a lifelong process. It begins the day we are born and ends the day we die. It is found in every society and comes in many forms, ranging from the "school of hard knocks," or learning by experience, to formal institutional learning—from postindustrial to nonindustrial communities, from rural to urban settings, and from youth to older learners. Sociologists of education look into a range of questions such as the following: How can we increase academic achievement? Do schools simply perpetuate the country's stratification system, rich versus poor? What moral or religious impact should schools have on young people? Are children who have access to technology in schools better

From *Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis*, 8th ed. (pp. 13–17), by J. H. Ballantine, F. H. Hammack, and J. Stuber, New York, NY: Routledge.

prepared for the future? While sociologists do not try to answer questions of right and wrong, good and bad, they do consider the state of education and the outcomes of certain policies and practices.

Sociologists study people who are interacting and in small to large group situations. Within this broad framework are many specialties; these can be divided into studies of institutions in societies (established aspects of society that address common needs of people), studies of processes, and studies of interactions between individuals and groups. The structure of society—meaning the recurring patterns of behavior and ordered interrelationships to achieve the needs of people—is represented by six major institutions that constitute some of the major subject areas in sociology: family, religion, education, politics, economics, and health. Formal, complex organizations, such as schools, are part of the institutional *structures* that carry out the work of societies.

Processes, the action part of society, bring the structures alive. Through the process of socialization, people learn how to fit into society and what roles are expected of them. The process of *stratification* determines where people fit into the social structure and their resultant lifestyle. *Change* is an ever-present process that constantly forces schools and other organizations to adjust to new demands. *Learning* takes place both formally in school settings and informally by our family, peers, media, and other influences in our lives. Not all children in the world receive a formal school education, but they all experience processes that prepare them for adult roles. The institution of education interacts and is interdependent with each of the other institutions. For instance, the family's involvement in education will affect the child's achievement in school.

Sociology of education as a field is devoted to understanding educational systems; the subject matter ranges from teacher and student interactions to large educational systems of countries. By studying education systematically, sociologists offer insights to help guide policies for schools. Research on educational systems is guided by sociological theories and studied using sociological methods. Although sociology provides a unique and powerful set of tools to objectively explore the educational systems of societies, it may disappoint those who have an axe to grind or whose goal is to proselytize rather than objectively understand or explore. Sometimes simply raising certain questions is ideologically uncomfortable for those who "know the right answer," but where there is a controversy about educational policy, several different views emerge and proponents feel their view is the right answer. The goal of sociology of education is to objectively consider educational practices, sometimes controversial topics, and even unpopular beliefs to gain an understanding of a system that affects us all.

As you read this book, please ask questions. Challenge ideas. Explore findings—but do so with the intent of opening new avenues for thought, discussion, and research. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to acquaint you with the unique perspective of the sociology of education: the questions it addresses, the theoretical approaches it uses, the methods used to study educational systems, and the open systems approach used in this book. We begin our discussion with an overview of sociology of education.

Why Study Sociology of Education?

There are several answers to this question. Someday you may be a professional in the field of education or in a related field; you will be a taxpayer, if you aren't already; or you may be a parent with children in the school system. Right now you are a student involved in higher or continuing education. Why are you

taking this class? If you are a sociology major, you are studying education as one of the major institutions of society; if you are an education major, sociology may give you a new or different perspective as you prepare to enter the classroom. You may be at college in pursuit of knowledge; or this course may be required, you may need the credit, perhaps the teacher is supposed to be good, or it simply may fit into your schedule. Let's consider some of these reasons for studying sociology of education.

Teachers and Other Professionals. Between 2014 and 2024, kindergarten, elementary, and secondary school teachers' job growth will be 6 percent (between 1.5 and 1.6 million teachers), about the average growth in the labor market in the United States, due to projected increases in student enrollments and retirements of current teachers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Yet the field is also experiencing a shortage, due to retirements.

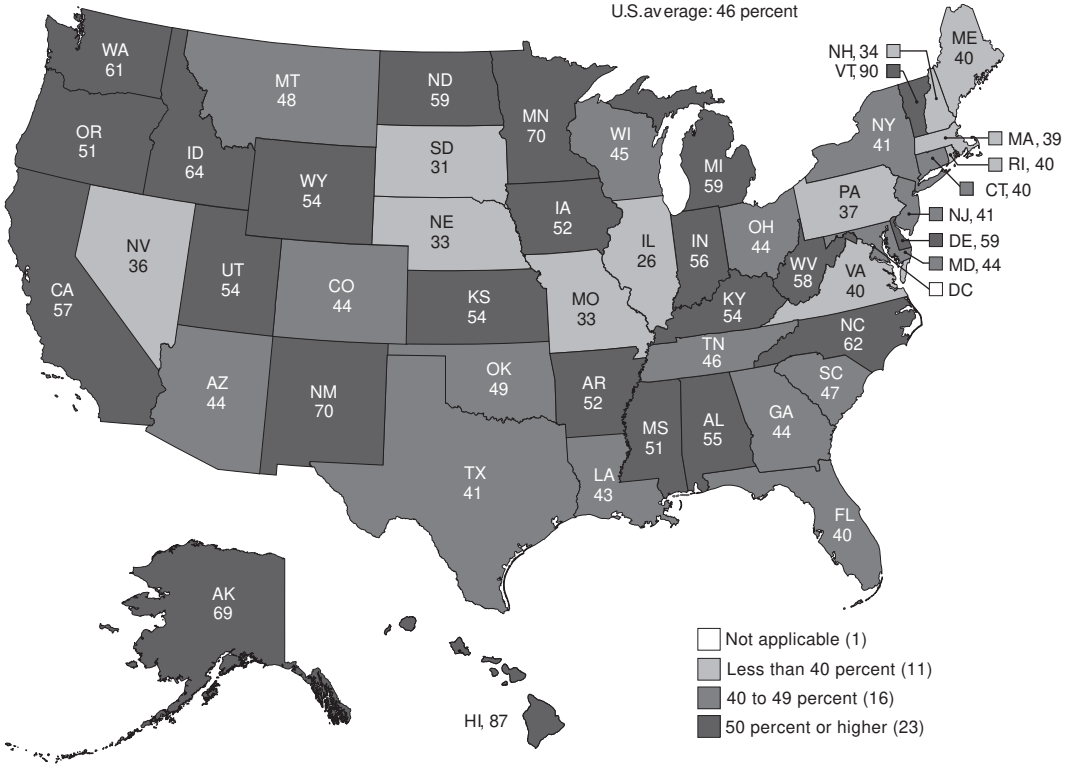
An estimated 3.1 million full-time teachers are involved in public school education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Other college graduates teach in their respective academic fields or become involved with policy matters in the schools. Professionals in such fields as social work and business have regular contact with schools when dealing with clients and employees. For both teachers and all of these other professionals, understanding the educational system is important knowledge for effective functioning.

Taxpayers. Taxpayers play a major role in financing schools at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels, and they should have an understanding of how this money is being spent and with what results. Almost 100 percent of the money used to pay for physical plants, materials, salaries, and other essentials in the US public educational system is from taxes. Revenues for schools come from three main sources: local, state, and federal funds from sales, income, and property taxes. In 2016, the total government spending on education was $1 trillion, or 15 percent of the federal budget (US Government Spending, 2016).

On average, local governments account for 44 percent, states 49 percent, and federal support 13 percent. Average spending per student in the United States is $10,314 (McCann, 2016), with low-income areas receiving significantly less than high-income areas. Sociology of education helps taxpayers understand the school system for which they are paying. Figure 1.1 shows the average percentage of school budgets that comes from state revenues in the United States, primarily from state taxes. In 23 states, over half of educational funding comes from the state; in another 14 states, at least half is from local revenues; and in the remaining states, no single source of revenue—local, state, or federal—reaches 50%.

Parents. A large percentage of adults in the United States are parents, with an average household size of 2.54 members (Statista, 2015). That is a lot of parents who have children in schools—and many want to understand what is happening during the six to seven hours a day their child is away from home. Sociology of education has some answers! According to the "47th Annual PDK/Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools" (PDK International 2015), adults expect schools to teach basic skills, discipline children, and instill values and a sense of responsibility. The concerns of the American public regarding schools have shown a high level of consistency from year to year (see Table 1.1) (Bushaw and Lopez, 2012). Lack of financial support and lack of discipline topped the list of problems seen by the public in 2012, with overcrowding being third. Fighting and gang violence and drugs were numbers 4 and 5 on the list.

Figure 1.1 State Revenues for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools as a Percentage of Total Public School Revenues, by State: School Year 2013–2014



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "National Public Education Financial Survey," 2013–2014.

Parents agree with students and educators that there is too much emphasis on standardized testing (64 percent), and 41 percent of respondents say parents should be able to have their children opt out of standardized testing. Ninety-five percent of respondents feel quality of teachers is important to improve public schools, and 84 percent support mandatory vaccinations. These are just a few of the findings from this representative national poll (NEA, 2016), but they illustrate the concerns parents have in their children's schools.

Students. Children spend many hours a day in school. They may not question the sociological researchers that try to understand their experiences, but they do think about the good and "bad" teachers, nice classmates and bullies, and easy and hard classes they have. The knowledge that researchers provide can help educators understand what students face and how to make the road smoother and more

Table 1.1 What Do You Think Are the Biggest Problems That the Public Schools of Your Community Must Deal With?

	National Totals		*Public School Parents*	
	2008 (%)	*2012 (%)*	*2008 (%)*	*2012 (%)*
Lack of financial support	17	35	19	43
Lack of discipline	10	8	3	3
Overcrowding	6	5	11	6
Fighting/gang violence	6	4	8	5
Drugs	4	2	4	2

successful. Grade school education is mandatory in most countries. High school level education is mandatory in developed countries, and available in some developing countries. According to a study by Harvard University and the Asian Development Bank, only 6.7 percent of the world's population has a college degree (The Huffington Post, 2010). Within the United States and other economically advanced countries, many citizens have higher levels of education. In the United States, among adults age 25 and older, 32 percent have attained a bachelor's; 12 percent have attained a master's degree or higher; and 2 percent have completed a PhD (US Census Bureau, 2014).

College attracts a wide variety of students with numerous incentives and goals for their educational experience. For sociology majors, sociology of education provides a unique look at educational systems and their interdependence with other major institutions in society. For education majors, new insights can be gained by looking into the dynamic interactions both within educational settings and between the institution of education and other institutions in society These insights should give education majors the ability to deal with complex organizational and interpersonal issues that confront teachers and administrators.

Other reasons. Being an informed citizen, understanding how tax dollars are spent, and gaining knowledge for the sake of knowledge—learning what there is to learn—are among the other reasons to study sociology of education.

Questions Asked by Sociologists of Education

As students, parents, and members of a community, we face educational issues constantly. Consider the following examples:

Are Our Children Safe in Schools? Among the most serious school problems, according to surveys of the American public, are lack of discipline, fighting and gang violence, and drugs in schools (Bushaw and Lopez, 2012). National studies indicate that most students do not experience criminal victimization, and those that do are more likely to experience property crimes. Students in schools with gang

members present express more concern about safety. In addition, one-third of students indicate that drugs are available and one-fifth that alcohol is available at their school (Addington et al., 2002). Among US 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, however, recent studies show a decrease in use of alcohol, cigarettes, and illicit or illegal drugs, and no increase in marijuana use. However, there is also a decrease in the perceived harm of marijuana use, and use of e-cigarettes remains high (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016). Are our students safer in schools than out of school? This question depends on the school and neighborhood, but studies conclude that students in most schools are safe from violence and drug abuse (CDC, 2015).

Should Minimum Competency in Key Subjects Such as Reading and Math Be Required for High School Graduation? In many countries and in some parts of the United States, students are required to take reading and math exams in order to enter high school and graduate from it. The No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top federal policies in the United States require all students to be tested at various times throughout their school years on Common Core standards. More recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, reaffirms the right of every child to have an equal opportunity for education. With high school graduation rates up, dropout rates down, and more students going to college, this law focuses on preparing all students for college and careers. Increasingly, as states hold schools and teachers responsible for the academic competence of students who move through the system (Borman and Cotner, 2012), this law will set goals for the next phase of educational programming at the national level (US Department of Education, 2015). It also reflects the global concern about the school-to-work pipeline and how to improve its effectiveness. Standardized tests are viewed by many as one way to hold schools accountable for students' progress. Yet, some educators, researchers, and parents question the value of requiring competency tests because they have little benefit for students who pass them and can harm students who do not pass (Warren and Grodsky, 2009). What are some implications of requiring—or not requiring—tests? This question will be discussed in later chapters.

How Should Education Be Funded? Many countries have centralized governmental educational funding and decision making. Across the United States, however, local taxpayers vote on local school levies that provide over 40 percent of school funding. The criticism is that local school districts vary dramatically in property or other taxes available to pay their share for schools based on rich versus poor districts. Some schools are forced to curtail programs and cut the number of teachers because there is no money. Local school levies are failing, setting some districts even farther behind. This could be a result of dissatisfied parents, competition for resources, a bid for more community control, or rebellion against higher taxes. The federal government contributes only about 2 percent of its total budget to schools (or $78.9 billion in 2016, and $85 billion proposed for 2017), and that is to support special initiatives (Tucker, 2015). Some aspects of these difficult issues will be addressed in the following chapters.

What Types of Teachers and Classroom Environments Provide the Best Learning Experience for Children? Educators debate lecture versus experiential learning, and cooperative learning versus individualized instruction. Studies (e.g., Pescosolido and Aminzade, 1999) of effective teaching strategies provide information to help educators carry out their roles effectively. For example, research on the

BOX 1.1 Current Research in the Sociology of Education

The following sampling of current research questions gives an idea of the wide range of subject matter:

- If parents are involved in their children's schooling, are children more successful in school?
- How effective are different teaching techniques, styles of learning, classroom organizations, and school and classroom size in teaching students of various types and abilities?
- What are some community influences on the school, and how do these affect devision making in schools, especially as it relates to the school curriculum and socialization of the young?
- Do teacher proficiency exams increase teaching quality? Do student achievement exams improve education?
- Can minority students learn better or more in an integrated school?
- Do schools perpetuate inequality?
- Should religion be allowed in schools? What are the practices around the world?

most effective size of classes and schools attempts to provide policymakers with data to inform decision making (Darling-Hammond, 2010). What other classroom factors influence teaching and learning?

A review of the titles of articles in the premiere journal *Sociology of Education* provides an overview of current topics being studied in the field. For example, researchers explored immigrant education, causes of academic failure and dropping out, social class differences in college expectations and acceptance, interracial friendships, racial segregation in schools, educational attainment and attitudes toward schooling, higher education aspirations and enrollments, and females and males in different academic fields. Look through this book and other sociology of education resources to add to the list of questions asked by sociologists of education; they cover a fascinating array of topics. Sociological research sheds light on educational issues, and thus helps teachers, citizens, and policy makers with the decision-making process. Multitudes of questions arise, and many of them are being studied around the world.

From what you have read so far, what topics in sociology of education interest you?

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READING 2

Getting Started

Understanding Education Through Sociological Theory

Jeanne H. Ballantine and Joan Z. Spade

Each of us has opinions about schools. These opinions, particularly if held by people in powerful positions in society, often translate into policy decisions related to schools and votes on tax levies. Theories provide sociologists and policy makers with a choice of frameworks to view educational systems in more depth, rather than simply using opinions, and help us to understand the research that sheds light on what happens in schools, enabling informed decisions about school policies. In this reading, we outline key elements of several major theoretical approaches in sociology of education to provide multiple frames from which to view educational issues discussed in this book.

Questions to consider as you read this article:

1. How can theories in the sociology of education help us understand educational systems?
2. What are some research questions that microlevel and macrolevel theorists might address? How do they differ?
3. Think of a current issue in education that is of interest to you, and consider how the theories discussed in this reading would help you understand that issue.

Adapted from "Social Science Theories on Teachers, Teaching, and Educational Systems," by J. H. Ballantine and J. Z. Spade, in *The New International Handbook of Teachers and Teaching* (pp. 81–102), edited by A. G. Dworkin and L. J. Saha, New York: Springer.

To understand how education systems work—or don't work—social scientists develop theories providing logical, carefully structured arguments to explain schools and society. Theories together with research provide valuable insights into all parts of education. Those parts are represented by the open systems model discussed in the introduction to this book. Some theories have limited use, but others stand the test of time and have relevance beyond the immediate circumstances that generated them.

The purpose of this discussion is to review some of the leading theoretical approaches used in the sociology of education to develop questions about educational systems as a way to help organize discussion. The theories in this reading are divided into micro and macro levels of analysis. Microlevel explanations focus on the individual and interactions between individuals, such as how teachers, administrators, students, parents, or others perceive and respond to educational settings and how their responses shape interactions. For example, we can use microlevel theories to understand how teachers respond differently to some children based on their gender or the social class of their families. Macrolevel explanations, on the other hand, focus on the institution of education in societies and the world, and how schools fit into the larger social structure of societies. As such, macrolevel theorists might study why different educational structures emerge in different societies, looking at the role of schools in society as a whole. Our discussion of these theories begins with microlevel explanations and moves to macrolevel theoretical perspectives.

For over a half-century, *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955) and numerous other books explored problems in school systems, from teachers' expectations of students to classroom dynamics and school policies such as tracking and testing. These issues continue to be debated today in both national and international contexts. We use the question of "why Johnny can't read" to illustrate the theories we introduce in this reading.

Microlevel Theories of Education

Efforts to understand why Johnny can't read are typically found at the micro level of analysis. They focus on interactions and experiences in the classroom between the student and others, often attributing failure to the students themselves, to their teachers, or to their home environments. *Interaction theorists* focus on the interpersonal dynamics of the situation and assume that individuals socially construct their lives based on the environments in which they find themselves. With origins in the field of social psychology, symbolic interaction theories link individuals with the symbols they use to understand the situations they are in. These symbols are developed and understood in their immediate social contexts, groups, and society. For example, the names students in each school or classroom call each other or the meanings they give to their schoolwork vary both within and between schools and are often linked to the social class backgrounds of students and their peers.

Nothing is taken for granted in interaction theory; what most people accept as given is questioned and studied. Thus, the question of why Johnny can't read begins with Johnny's "social construction of reality," as well as the socially constructed realities of his teachers, school administrators, parents, and others in his social world and embedded in all interactions Johnny has (Berger & Luckmann, 1963). Add to the puzzle complications of race, class, and gender, socially constructed categories themselves, and we have the context for symbolic interaction theory as illustrated in the reading by Morris in Chapter 7.

Interaction theories also focus on what teachers and students *do* in school. These theories grew from reactions to the macrolevel structural-functional and conflict theories, which focus on society and how schools as institutions fit into the big picture. The criticism is that macrolevel approaches miss the dynamics of everyday school interactions and life in classrooms that shape children's futures. Interaction theorists question things many people overlook, such as how students get labeled and tracked in schools; they ask questions about the most common, ordinary interactions between school participants. Sociologists of education using this approach are likely to focus on students' attitudes, values, and achievements, such as their motivations to do well in school; students' self-concepts; and how interactions between peers, students, teachers, and principals are shaped by the social class backgrounds of all participants.

Among the several approaches taken by interaction theorists are symbolic interaction, role theory, and labeling theory; dramaturgy and ethnomethodology; and phenomenological sociology. The following discussion gives an overview of some of these approaches.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbols are the concepts or ideas that we use to frame our interactions. These concepts can be expressed by words or gestures; they define reality and affect our sense of self and the social hierarchies that surround us. As such, children are viewed as active participants in school and are, therefore, agents in creating the social reality in which they live. For example, popularity is a major issue for many children, especially in middle school years. Popularity is mostly a function of being visible and having everyone know who you are, but it also specifies a symbolic hierarchy of social power. Sometimes popularity is gained by representing the school in an athletic contest, by being attractive, or by being in a leadership position. The difficulty is that positions of popularity are scarce. Thus, competition is created, and some individuals are going to be "losers," with less social power, while a few others are "winners" in this socially defined popularity contest. Consider also the example of academic grouping. No matter what teachers or administrators call reading groups and different levels of English, mathematics, or science classes, children quickly learn whether they are "good" or "bad" students. Thus, symbols define students' and teachers' interactions—specifying who is "bright," "cooperative," "trouble," and so forth. Symbols define what experiences are "good" or "bad." In other words, symbols create our social reality.

Considerable inequality occurs in the symbols students bring with them to school. Children from families who cannot afford to purchase desired clothing or other status symbols are more likely to be the "losers." Those who "win" are more likely to have access to symbolic resources, including higher class–based language patterns and social experiences. The winners are given special privileges in the classroom or school. These students, who exude privilege in the symbols they bring with them, are more likely to develop leadership skills and generally feel good about themselves.

Symbolic interaction theory has its roots in the works of G. H. Mead and C. H. Cooley on the development of the self through social interaction, whether in school or in other areas of life. People within a culture generally interpret and define social situations in similar ways because they share experiences and expectations (Ballantine, Roberts, and Korgen 2018). Students look to others, particularly their teachers, to understand their place in this culture. Common norms evolve to guide behavior. Students learn through interaction how they are different from others based on individual experiences, social class, and status.

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory is closely related to the symbolic interactionist perspective (Goffman, 1967). If Johnny is told often enough that he is stupid and can't do the work, the label of "stupid" can become a *self-fulfilling prophecy* as he comes to incorporate that label into his sense of self. Then, teachers and others who create and reinforce the label continue to respond to Johnny as if that symbol is an accurate reflection of his abilities. Using labeling theory, we can better understand how teachers' expectations based on students' race, class, ethnic background, gender, religion, or other characteristics affect students' self-perceptions and achievement levels.

Labeling theory helps us to understand how microlevel interactions in the school contribute to individuals' formations of their sense of self. Young people from 6 to 18 years old spend much of their time in school or school-related activities; therefore, *student* is a status that has enormous impact on how they see themselves. Interaction with others in school affects students' sense of self. The image that is reflected back to someone—as student or as teacher, for example—can begin to mold one's sense of competence, intelligence, and likability. The school creates a symbolic structure that influences how individuals make sense of their reality and interact with others. Official school positions such as president of the student council, lower-level reader, or athlete can become important elements of a student's sense of self.

The powerful interactions between labelers and labeled have been studied in schools. A classic study found that students in classrooms where the teachers were told that students in their classes were "late bloomers" and would "blossom" that year achieved much more academically than students in classrooms where the teacher had no expectations for students, even though students in both classrooms were similar in ability and potential (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

The process of labeling by assigning students to academic and nonacademic tracks and ability groups serves to reproduce inequalities in society. Low-income students are often placed in low-ability groups, which can become a "life sentence" affecting achievement and future opportunities. Interactions between participants in the school and classroom give insight into the labeling process. For example, in another classic study, Rist (1970, 1977) found that teachers formed expectations for students based on their race, class, ethnicity, and gender and that these expectations had long-term effects on students' achievement and sense of themselves. The result is that low-income students are more likely to be placed in lower-ability groups that do not reflect their actual ability (Rist, 1970, 1977; Sadovnik, 2007).

Outside-of-school statuses can be an important basis for interactions in schools. In addition to social class, gender is reinforced in social interactions in the classroom, as shown in research findings indicating that girls struggle more with self-esteem, especially in middle school, than do boys (AAUW Educational Foundation, 2001). Sadker and Sadker (1994) have found clear and distinct patterns in the way teachers interact with boys and girls in the classroom. Teachers tend to call on boys more, wait longer for boys' responses to questions, and expect boys to act out more in the classroom. Girls, on the other hand, are expected to be quiet and compliant, and teachers tend to do things for girls, rather than push them to succeed. Given how gendered expectations shape interactions in the classroom, it is not surprising that girls tend to struggle with self-esteem issues at adolescence. In Chapter 7, Roslyn Arlin Mickelson discusses gender differences in classrooms for boys and girls and how these differences are changing.

Furthermore, these patterns of gender and class differences vary by race and ethnicity (Carter, 2006; Grant, 2004). The point is that schools are powerful institutions, and the interactions within them heavily influence how children think about themselves and their futures. Students from different social classes, races, genders, and sexual orientations bring different orientations, patterns, and behaviors into the schools, resulting in unique symbolic and interactional experiences (see Rist in this chapter's readings).

Dramaturgy

Erving Goffman looked for connections between the micro levels and macro levels of sociology. Stemming from Durkheim's ideas of the importance of rituals and symbols in everyday life, the messages they transfer, and the collective conscience that develops from them, Goffman wrote that everyday interactions are based on codes or systems that represent rules of the larger society (Antikainen et al., 2010). He compared social life for individuals to front-stage and backstage behavior on which people perform differently depending on the impressions they wish to project to the audience (Goffman, 1959). Goffman's influence is also seen in the study of school interactions with his concepts of "encounters"—conscious and planned interaction (Goffman, 1990). As Johnny comes to school, he goes "on stage" and presents himself through his clothing and other symbols that he adopts. He attempts to manage the impressions he gives to others, including teachers and peers, in order to manipulate how they define him as he struggles with learning to read.

Rational Choice Theory

While rational choice theory does not ignore symbols and interactions, this theory focuses primarily on the assumption that there are costs and rewards involved in our individual decisions within the classroom and school. According to rational choice theory, if benefits outweigh costs, the individual is likely to act in order to continue receiving benefits. If costs outweigh benefits, the individual will seek other courses of action. In education, the question is how weighing of costs and benefits influences decisions about educational choices by students, teachers, and administrators in the conduct of school experiences.

For example, students who consider dropping out of school likely go through some analysis, comparing benefits of staying in school, such as ability to get a better job, with costs to themselves, for instance their battered self-esteem in schools. For Johnny, deciding whether to do what is necessary to learn to read or to focus on behaviors that gain him esteem in other areas may be part of his school day. Whether we would agree that individuals have assessed the costs and the benefits correctly is not the point; the issue is how individuals evaluate the benefits and costs at a given moment in making what theorists describe as a *rational choice* for them.

Rational choice theory can also be applied to the issue of teacher retention. Of those teachers who made over $40,000 in their first year of teaching 97% returned the next year. Only 87% who earned less than $40,000 returned, illustrating that a rational choice about financial incentives influenced teacher decisions (NCES, 2015). Rational choice theorists would explain this in terms of the perceived costs—relatively low salary for a college graduate; minimal respect from parents, students, and administrators; long days for 9 months of the year; and little opportunity to participate in teaching- and job-related decisions (Dworkin, Saha, & Hill, 2003). Teachers compare these costs to the benefits of teaching—the feeling

of making a contribution to society and helping children; time off in the summer; and enjoying aspects of teaching, coaching, or directing. When costs are seen as higher than benefits, teachers leave the profession, resulting in high teacher burnout and dropout rates (Dworkin, 2007). Rational choice theory extends interactionist theories and is useful as we try to understand decision making of individuals in schools.

Macrolevel Theories of Education

Whereas microlevel theories focus on the individual's construction of reality in educational settings and interpersonal interactions between individuals and in small groups within schools, macrolevel explanations focus on larger societal and cultural systems. As such, schools as organizations, the processes of teaching and learning, and the interactions within schools and classrooms are viewed as part of larger social contexts.

Functional Theory

Functional theory helps us to understand how education systems work and what purpose education serves in societies. While this is not a leading theory in sociology of education today, we describe it here because of its historical importance and influence on the field today, and because other theories arose as reactions to or modifications of functional theory. Functional theory starts with the assumption that education as an institution in society operates, along with other institutions, to facilitate the stability of society. There is a relationship between schools and other institutions in society, as all institutions must fulfill necessary societal functions to maintain society. Each part of a society—education, family, political and economic systems, health, religion—works together to create a functioning social system. Each part contributes necessary elements to the functioning and survival of the whole society, just as multiple parts of the body work together to keep us healthy and active. As such, in functional theory schools are analyzed in terms of their functions, or purposes, in the whole system (see the discussion of school functions below). The degree of interdependence among parts in the system relates to the degree of integration among these parts; all parts complement each other, and the assumption is that a smooth-running, stable system is well integrated. Shared values, or consensus, among members are important components of the system, as these help keep it in balance and working smoothly. In terms of why Johnny can't read, it may be that it is not important to society for Johnny to read, or it is simply not functional for all students to know how to read. Consider why this might be so.

Functional theories of education originated in the work of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who contributed a method for viewing schools and an explanation of how schools help to maintain order in societies. According to Durkheim, a major role of education in society was to create unity by providing a common moral code necessary for social cohesion in a society. Durkheim's major works in education were published in collections titled *Moral Education* (1925/1961), *The Evolution of Educational Thought* (1938/1977), and *Education and Society* (1903/1956), all written in the early 1900s. In these works, he set forth a definition of education that has guided the field.

In *Moral Education*, Durkheim outlined his beliefs about the function of schools and their relationship to society. Moral values are, for Durkheim, the foundation of the social order, and society is perpetuated through its educational institutions, which help instill values and a sense of moral order in

the youngest members of society. In this work, he analyzed classrooms as "small societies," or agents of socialization, reflecting the moral order of the social system at that time. The school serves as an intermediary between the *affective morality* (or a morality related to emotion or feeling) of the family and the rigorous morality of society. Discipline is the morality of the classroom, and without it the classroom can become like an undisciplined mob, according to Durkheim. Because children learn to be social beings and develop appropriate social values through contact with others, schools are an important training ground for learning social skills and the "rules" of the larger society (instrumental skills), as opposed to the more emotional (affective) character of families. Functionalists also argue that the passing on of knowledge and behaviors is a primary function of schools, one necessary to maintain order and fill needed positions in society. Following Durkheim, sociologists see the transmission of moral and occupational education, discipline, and values as necessary for the survival of society. Thus, schools play a very important role in maintaining functioning of the larger society.

Durkheim was concerned primarily with value transmission for the stability of society. He did not consider the possible conflict between this stable view of the values and skills, and what is necessary for changing emerging industrial societies. He argued also that education should be under the control of the state, free from special interest groups; however, as we know, most governments are subject to influence from interest groups and changes in society, as you will read throughout this book. Talcott Parsons (1959) developed modern functional theory. He saw education as performing certain important tasks or "functions" for society, such as preparing young people for roles in a democratic society. Parsons argued that female elementary school teachers (he assumed all elementary school teachers should be female) play a role in transitioning children from the home and protection of mother to schools where a more impersonal female role socializes children to meet the less personal and more universal demands of society (Parsons, 1959). This linking of teachers to their role in the larger society is only one example of how functionalists have viewed the role of teachers (see the reading by Ingersoll and Merrill in Chapter 5).

Other functionalists argued that some degree of inequality is inevitable in society because the most challenging positions required attracting the most talented individuals who must spend time and money getting the necessary education to fill important roles in society. These theorists saw schools as part of a large system in which individuals who dedicate themselves to training for higher-level occupations would receive greater rewards in terms of income and prestige (Davis & Moore, 1945). This functional theory sees achievement in schools as based on merit, not one's status. Thus, the function of education is to support capitalism through the distribution of labor, allowing those with the most "merit" to achieve and fill higher-level positions in society.

Later functional theorists built on the base provided by Durkheim, Parsons, and others. For example, Dreeben (1968) considered the social organization of schools, while others examined the values taught in school and how these lead to greater societal consensus and preparation for one's role in society (Cookson & Sadovnik, 2002). To summarize, social scientists who research and interpret events from the functional perspective focus on the central functions of education for society as a whole (Ballantine, Hammack, and Stuber, 2017). We briefly summarize those functions as follows:

Socialization: Teaching Children to Be Members of Society. Most people remember their first day of elementary school, marking a transition between the warm, loving, accepting world of the family and a more impersonal school world that emphasizes discipline, knowledge, skills, responsibility, and

obedience. In school, children learn that they must prove themselves; they are no longer accepted regardless of their behaviors as they were in their families. They must meet certain expectations and compete for attention and rewards. They also must prepare to participate in their society's political and economic systems, in which a literate populace is necessary to make informed decisions on issues. Citizens expect schools to respond to the constant changes in societies. In heterogeneous societies with diverse groups and cultures, school socialization helps to integrate immigrants by teaching them the language and customs of the larger society and by working to reduce intergroup tensions. This provides cohesion and order in society as a whole.

Teaching Children to Be Productive Members of Society. Societies use education to pass on values, skills, and knowledge necessary for survival. Sometimes this process occurs in formal classrooms, sometimes in informal places. For example, in West African villages children may have several years of formal education in a village school, but they learn future occupational roles informally by observing their elders in their families and by "playing" at the tasks they will soon undertake for survival. The girls help pound cassava root for the evening meal while boys build model boats and practice negotiating the waves. It is typically only the elite—sons and daughters of the rulers and the wealthy—who receive formal education beyond basic literacy in most traditional societies (Ballantine, Roberts, and Korgen, 2018). However, elders and family members in developed societies cannot teach all the skills necessary for survival. Formal schooling emerged to meet the needs of industrial and postindustrial societies, furnishing the specialized training required by rapidly growing and changing technology. Schools in industrialized societies play a major part in placing students into later work roles.

Selection and Training of Individuals for Positions in Society. Most people have taken standardized tests, received grades at the end of a term or year, and asked teachers to write recommendation letters. Functionalists see these activities as part of the selection process prevalent in competitive societies with formal education systems. Schools distribute credentials—grades, test scores, and degrees—that determine the college or job opportunities available to individuals in society, the fields of study individuals pursue, and ultimately individual status in society. For example, selection criteria determine who gets into the "best" colleges or even into college at all, thereby sealing one's place in society. As you will read later in this book, countries today are using standardized tests in a competition to provide the "best" education in our global society.

Promoting Change and Innovation. Institutions of higher education are expected to generate new knowledge, technology, and ideas, and to produce students with up-to-date skills and information required to lead industry and other key institutions in society. In a global age of computers and other electronic technology, critical thinking and analytical skills are essential as workers face issues that require problem solving rather than rote memorization. Thus, the curriculum must change to meet the needs of the social circumstances. Familiarity with technological equipment—computers, Internet resources, electronic library searches, and so forth—becomes a critical survival skill for individuals and society. Colleges and universities are called on to provide ideas and innovations as well as skilled workers. Consider the example of India, which has top-ranked technical institutes training their graduates to meet changing world needs. These highly skilled graduates of India's colleges and universities are employed by companies around the world, including those from Europe and the United States, to

process information and send it back the next morning. Thus, well-trained, efficient engineers and computer experts working in India for lower wages than in many developed countries have become an essential part of the global economy (Drori, 2006). Many technologically trained graduates from India also come to the United States on special H1B visas, but the current U.S. government is tightening restrictions on these visas (Ainsley, 2017).

Latent Functions of Education. In addition to these intended functions that are filled by schools, education provides unseen latent functions. These are unintended consequences of the educational process. For example, schools keep children off the streets until they can be absorbed into productive roles in society, serving an informal "babysitting" function. In fact, in the United States, children now stay in school well into their 20s, and the age at which they join the labor force or start families is much later than it was in previous generations. Schools also provide young people with a place to congregate, which fosters a youth culture of music, fashion, slang, dances, dating, and sometimes gangs. At the ages when social relationships are being established, especially with the opposite sex, colleges serve as "mating" and "matching" places for young adults. Education also weakens parental control over youth, helps them begin the move toward independence, and provides experiences in large, impersonal secondary groups (Ballantine & Roberts, 2014).

Functional theorists believe that when the above social functions are not adequately addressed, the educational system is ripe for change. The structure and the processes within the educational institution remain stable only if the basic functions of education in society are being met.

Functionalist arguments, therefore, look to how the structure of schooling "works" within the larger societal context. Understanding why Johnny can't read, thus, is not as important as understanding how Johnny's inability to read fits within the larger social order.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists challenge the functionalist assumptions that schools are ideologically and politically neutral and that schools operate based on meritocracy where each child is able to achieve to the highest level of his or her own ability so as to better meet the needs of society. Conflict theorists, instead, argue that inequality is based on one's position in the social system, not merit, and that schooling privileges some children and disadvantages others. There are several branches of conflict theory, which include different explanations of the role education systems play in maintaining inequality. Recent theories integrate ethnicity, race, and gender issues and add politics and culture to the traditional Marxist class and economic issues. In addition, issues of "reproduction and resistance" are recent additions to the conflict perspective. Origins of conflict theory are situated in the writings of Marx (1847/1955) and later Max Weber (1948a, 1948b, 1961).

In contrast to functional theory, conflict theory assumes a tension in society created by the competing interests of groups in society. Conflicts occur even when teachers, students, parents, and administrators agree on the rules. Each group obeys the rules even though the rules are not in their best interests because they may not see alternatives or may fear the consequences of not obeying. However, conflict theorists disagree on whether participants in the education system generally conform to the rules, rebel against them, or feel they have no choices. The roots of conflict thought are outlined below, and contemporary conflict theory, originating in the 1960s and 1970s, is discussed.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was outraged over the social conditions of the exploited workers in the class system that resulted from early industrialization. He contended that the economic structure of industrialization, or what he called capitalism, created competing groups, the "haves" and the "have-nots," who lived in a constant state of tension (conflict) over resources that one had and the other wanted. The basis of this struggle is that the haves (or the owners of the means by which goods are produced in a society) control economic resources and thus have power, wealth, material goods, privilege (including access to the best schools and education), and influence. The have-nots (or the people who work for those who own the factories that produce goods in society) present a constant challenge as they seek a larger share of economic resources (wages) for their own survival. According to Marx, the haves often use coercive power and manipulation to hold society together. However, power can also be maintained by ideology—controlling ideas, or what people believe to be true. Conflict theorists view change as inevitable, as conflicts of interest should lead to the overthrow of existing power structures. Marx believed that class conflict would continue until the capitalist system of economic dominance was overthrown and replaced by a more equitable system. However, this revolution has yet to happen.

Marx argued that schools create and maintain inequality by teaching students an ideology that serves the interests of the rich and instills in students a sense of "false consciousness." That is, students in schools learn to accept the myth of meritocracy, that all have an equal chance of achieving. Those who buy into this ideology and fail often believe that their failure is due to their own shortcomings and lack of ability. Students learn to internalize their own lower position in society and their lowly fate, thus accepting a false consciousness and legitimizing the wealth and power of capitalists. Marx would also argue that the organization of schooling is set up in such a way that all students will not receive the same quality of education; thus, some students coming out of the educational system will work in factories for less pay.

Weber's Contributions to the Sociology of Education. Max Weber (1864–1920) was said to have argued with Marx's ghost because he believed that conflict in society was not based solely in economic relations as Marx had argued. Weber contended that inequalities and potential conflict were sustained in different distributions of status (prestige), power (ability to control others), and class (economic relations). While Weber also felt that conflict was a constant possibility, he focused more on power relationships between groups and differences in status that create a structure of inequality in societies.

Weber provided a less systematic treatment of education than Durkheim. His work in the field of sociology, however, has contributed to our understanding of many aspects of education. He is noted for his contributions to the understanding of bureaucracy and for the concept of *status groups.* In fact, he writes that the primary activity of schools is to teach particular "status cultures." Status cultures can be thought of as subcultures based on the social status of the group in society, such as working-class or upper-class culture. Each status group has its own set of symbols (e.g., sneakers that are "cool"), values (how important it is to go to college), and beliefs (whether studying and learning are important) that are known to the individuals in the group, but not fully understood or available to those outside the group. Power relationships and the conflicting interests of individuals and groups in society influence educational systems, for it is the interests and purposes of the dominant groups in society that shape the schools.

Weber (1961) spoke of the "tyranny of educational credentials" as a prerequisite for high-status positions, which thus maintains inequality in the social order of society. This theme is continued by

Randall Collins (see his reading in this chapter), another conflict theorist following in Weber's tradition. Collins focuses on the increased requirements for higher-level positions used by more advantaged individuals to further their status (often called credentialism) (Collins, 1979). The rapid expansion of educational qualifications, faster than the number of jobs, has led to "credential inflation," yet these credentials are not necessary for most jobs. The result is that the credentials required for jobs keep increasing, further separating those who can afford the time and money to achieve these credentials and those who cannot.

Within the school there are "insiders" whose status culture, Weber believed, is reinforced through the school experience, and "outsiders" who face barriers to success in school. As we apply these ideas to school systems today to explain the situation of poor and minority students, and why Johnny can't read, the relevance of Weber's brand of conflict theory becomes evident. His theory deals with conflict, domination, and status groups struggling for wealth, power, and status in society. While education is used by individuals and society as a means to attain desired ends, it also creates unequal groups in society. Relating this to Karl Marx's writings on conflict theory, education produces a disciplined labor force for military, political, or other areas of control and exploitation by the elite. Status groups differ in property ownership; cultural status, such as social class or ethnic group membership; and power derived from positions in government or other organizations.

Weber, however, can also be considered a functionalist whose writings, using cross-cultural examples and exploring preindustrial and modern societies, shed light on the role of education in different societies at various time periods (Weber, 1948a). In preindustrial times, education served the primary purpose of training people to fit into a way of life and a particular station in society. With industrialization, however, new pressures faced education from upwardly mobile members of society vying for higher positions in the economic system. Educational institutions became increasingly important in training people for new roles in society (Weber, 1948b).

Conflict Theory Today. Marx and Weber set the stage for the many branches of conflict theory advocated by theorists today. Research from the conflict theorists' perspective tends to focus on those tensions created by power and conflict that ultimately cause change. Some conflict theorists, following from Marx's emphasis on the economic structure of society, see mass public education as a tool of powerful capitalists to control the entrance into higher levels of education through the selection and allocation function. Marx argued that schools contributed to a "false consciousness," the equivalent of teaching students that the oppressive conditions that shape their lives cannot be changed. They must simply accept their situations, or even believe that they are not as worthy as others who are more powerful or have more advantages. Many conflict theorists believe that until society's economic and political systems are changed, school reform providing equal access to all children will be impossible (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Conflict theorists studying education systems point out that differences in the achievement of students are not based primarily on their ability or intelligence; rather, schools reflect the needs of the powerful, dominant groups in society and serve to perpetuate a capitalistic system that reproduces social classes. Teacher expectations based on characteristics of children, such as race and social class background, shape students' learning experiences and affect their achievements. For instance, teacher expectations may differ for poor students who have more limited language skills or speak with a dialect and lack middle-class dress, appearance, and manners. Some also argue that differential funding and

resources for schools affect achievements of students. Poor and minority students are also more likely to be placed or tracked into lower reading and academic groups, placements that are hard to change. These groups are given different curricula. The higher-class students receive more mentally challenging curricula that prepare them to think creatively and make decisions, and the lower-class students experience less challenging curricula that prepare them for manual labor. The reading in this chapter on Social Reproduction (Swartz) describes a newer application of conflict theory. They are more likely to lead students to drop out of school. All of the above factors make it harder for Johnny to learn to read and serve to reproduce inequalities in society as a whole.

Other theorists apply conflict theory arguments to the school and classroom level of analysis. For example, Willard Waller believes that schools are in a state of constant potential conflict and disequilibrium; teachers are threatened with the loss of their jobs because of lack of student discipline; academic authority is constantly threatened by students, parents, school boards, and alumni who represent other, often competing, interest groups in the system; and students are forced to go to schools, which they may consider oppressive and demeaning (Waller, 1932/1965). Although larger conflicts between groups in society may be the basis for these within-school patterns, the focus of some conflict theorists is not on these larger societal relationships. Many of these examples reinforce the concept of reproduction, discussed next.

Reproduction and Resistance Theories. In the second half of the 20th century, reproduction and resistance theories further expanded the ideas of conflict theories. The argument of cultural reproduction and resistance theories, very generally, is that those who dominate capitalistic systems mold individuals to suit their own purposes. These theorists examine how forms of culture passed on by families and schools end up shaping individuals' views of their worlds (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The concept of social reproduction was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Europe to explore the claim that schools actually increase inequality through the process of "teaching." At this time when equality was a central interest, the idea that schools might be contributing to societies' inequalities led to studies of the possibility that schools and families were actually perpetuating social class structures. Following from Marx, schools were viewed as part of a superstructure, along with family, politics, religion, culture, and economy, organized around the interests of the dominant capitalist group. The dominant group needs workers with good work habits, skills, and loyalty to produce products and services needed by capitalists in exchange for wages for their labor. Schools served the needs of the dominant group by teaching students their roles in society and perpetuating the belief that the system was a fair and merit-based way to select workers. For example, Bowles and Gintis's (1976) correspondence theory takes a macro view of schools, arguing that schools reproduce inequality and create class and power differences in societies. The reproduction process takes place through the student selection and allocation processes (see "Social Reproduction" article in this chapter). These processes create hierarchies within schools and societies, socializing students into these hierarchies of power and domination, and legitimizing the hierarchies by claiming they are based on merit. Following the assumptions of Marx, Bowles and Gintis argue that school structure is based on the needs and standards of the dominant capitalist group in society and thus serves the purposes of that group. Students both bring into and take away different cultural competencies. The bottom line is that schools motivate higher-class students to achieve and decrease ambitions of others, creating a false consciousness (Apple, 1993, 1996).

Resistance theories go beyond social reproduction theories by arguing that teachers and students are not passive participants in the school process and that they do not always follow the expectations that result in social reproduction. For example, students may resist their socialization into certain roles in society (Willis, 1979), just as teachers do not have to accept their role in facilitating reproduction. Teachers may work with all students to give them more equal chances in the system. Teachers can empower students with curricula that are participatory, affective, problem solving, multicultural, democratic, interdisciplinary, and activist (Shor, 1986). Therefore, participants in schools are not necessarily passive actors in the reproduction of inequality.

Contemporary Theories in Sociology of Education

Two concepts related to the development of reproduction and resistance theories are social capital and cultural capital. As you can see from the above, conflict theory started to move from strictly a macro/societal focus to more of a focus on interaction that maintains power and privilege. The concept of *cultural capital* was introduced in the 1970s primarily by Pierre Bourdieu (1973), and *social capital* was introduced by James S. Coleman (1988) in the late 1980s. These two concepts bridged macrolevel and microlevel explanations, attempting to understand how larger societal structures were maintained in day-to-day interactions.

Social capital refers to the social resources students bring to their education and future involvement in school or community. It results in building of networks and relationships students can use as contacts for future opportunities. Ultimately, these networks are connections that make achievement possible and connect individuals to the larger group. Several researchers have applied this concept to the study of students, teachers, and teaching. For instance, connections students make in elite private schools and alumni connections through private schools and colleges enhance future economic status. Coleman's concept of social capital was used to explain the role of schools in reproducing social class.

Bourdieu's *cultural capital* is used in many research studies today. Trained as a sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu (1931–2002) delved into education's influences on stratification and social class, trying to reconcile the influences of social structures on the subjective experiences of individuals. Among the many concepts attributed to Bourdieu and in use today are *cultural and symbolic capital, symbolic violence*, and *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1973). He saw individuals as having different cultural capital based on their social settings. *Social capital* (see above) included the sum of resources held by individuals or groups because of their respective contacts or networks. *Symbolic capital* referred to the prestige, honor, or attention an individual held. These were each sources of individual power. *Cultural capital* refers to cultural practices, including dress and mannerisms, language patterns and expressions, and knowledge of the world derived from life experiences such as visits to museums, all of which provide knowledge of middle-class and upper-class culture; that is, the culture of schools. Cultural capital does not refer to knowing about "culture," commonly thought of in terms of art, music, and theater. Rather cultural capital allows students from middle and upper classes to use patterns of talking, common words, general knowledge, and values from their lives outside of school to fit into the patterns of interaction in school (Lareau, 1989). All individuals have cultural capital, and the form of cultural capital one has is generally related to one's social class background. A child who can speak the teacher's "language" is likely to fare better in school than one who has not been

exposed to the cultural capital of the schools. Unfortunately, the cultural capital of children from working-class backgrounds is rarely valued in schools. Dominant groups pass on exposure to the dominant culture that their children take to school. Not only do their children know how schools work, but they also come to school with the knowledge of what to do to be successful there. Working-class children generally do not go to school with this advantage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

The important point here is that higher social, cultural, and symbolic capital result in more power for the holder. Over time these power relationships come to be seen by individuals as legitimate. Consider how working-class children in schools might see the educational success of middle-class children as "legitimate" because they work hard or have more natural ability, whereas these advantages are bestowed on middle-class and upper-class children because of their advantaged position in the social structure (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Cultural capital inadvertently is used by schools to reproduce inequality both in the interactions and in the structure of education. For example, different curricula in different tracks create a system of educational inequality for students. While the assignment of students to learning groups is supposed to be based on explicit criteria (merit) such as test scores or completion of previous work, in actuality cultural capital plays a considerable role in who is assigned to groups. As early as preschool, children experience different expectations from teachers (Lubeck, 1985). As noted earlier, Rist (1977) found that children were assigned to groups in kindergarten based on dress and speech patterns. Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade (1987) and Lucas (1999) found that family social class background was a strong predictor of the high school "track" in which students were placed. The end result is that students from working-class backgrounds end up learning more basic skills under strict rules because they are expected to cause problems in the classroom. Those from upper classes learn how to make decisions, be creative and autonomous, and prepare for college (Anyon, 1980; Miller, Kohn, & Schooler, 1985). And, students end up in networks within the learning groups they are placed in, further reinforcing their social and cultural capital advantages or disadvantages. At the college level, students are again tracked into two-year or four-year educations with differences in the curriculum, goals for educational outcomes, and economic results for students (Pincus, 1980, 2002). Therefore, schools end up perpetuating differences in cultural capital by maintaining groups in school that are generally homogeneous in terms of social class backgrounds. And, you thought Johnny couldn't read because he lacked the ability needed to read well!

Teachers also bring varying degrees of cultural capital to schools and classrooms. Some teachers come from working-class and middle-class backgrounds and bring that cultural capital to the education system, both in their own training and in how they teach others. However, in some cases, the students they teach may bring a different cultural capital to the classroom, cultural capital that is either higher or lower in the hierarchy of power and wealth. And, parents with higher cultural capital tend to be more involved in their children's schooling, more able to provide their children with stronger educational experiences, and more at ease with the cultural capital of the school (Lareau, 1989).

The concept of cultural capital has been used in a number of studies of schools and classrooms. Consider McLaren's (1989) study of his experiences as a middle-class white teacher teaching in an inner-city school, facing violence and hostile parents. The cultural capital mismatch he faced was one in which his middle-class cultural capital was ineffective in working with the children he taught. This situation is repeated over and over again because teachers, by the very fact that they have the credentials to teach, have adopted a cultural capital that is not compatible with the children they teach from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Another study of social capital shows how resources in the family, community, and school serve as capital assets for improving student academic performance and psychological well-being (Schneider, 2002). This study points out that active involvement of parents at home with their children on homework and educational decisions can influence social capital and future opportunities. Portes and Fernández-Kelly (2008) further illustrate the value of cultural capital. They found that children of Mexican immigrants gained cultural capital in different ways, sometimes from people outside their families, to ensure that they went on to succeed in college. This study illustrates that the cultural capital children get from their social class backgrounds does not always have to hold them back. However, only a very few students in Portes and Fernández-Kelly's larger study actually made it to college and successful professional careers.

Code theory was developed around the same time as cultural capital. Code theory is presented in several volumes that lay out the sociolinguistic theory of language codes envisioned by Basil Bernstein (1924–2000). *Codes* refer to organizing principles used by members of a social group. The idea is that the language we use reflects and shapes the assumptions we hold about our relationship to a certain group. Our relationship with that group influences the way we use language.

Bernstein conceptualizes two types of codes—*restricted* and *elaborated.* Restricted codes are those we use with others who share the same knowledge base. It allows us to shortcut language because of assumptions and knowledge we share with those close to us. When we use restricted codes, our language is brief, and we expect the person or persons with whom we are speaking to fill in the rest of our meaning—for example, when we say, "Get that." With elaborated codes, on the other hand, we do not take shortcuts. Everything is spelled out in more detail to be sure the others understand what we are communicating (Bernstein, 1971). This form is used with people we do not know well and in formal speech, such as "Please pick up the hat on the table" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). People learn their place in the society by the language codes they use. The codes come to symbolize social identity.

As applied to schools, Bernstein was interested in the poor performance of working-class students, especially in language-based subjects. Though their scores in math-related classes were similar to the scores of middle-class students, lower performance in language signified to him a relation between social class and language. The result is that language codes aid in the social reproduction of class and differences in power, not only in school but also in politics and the workplace. Working-class children are at a disadvantage in schools because they do not share the dominant code of the middle-class and upper-class students. Even the curriculum and transmission of knowledge in schools reflect the dominant code. In trying to understand why Johnny can't read, it may be the codes he brings with him to the classroom.

Although code theory is used less often than cultural capital in understanding processes within schools, it provides an important perspective for us to think about as we study and try to understand inequality in educational achievement.

The last theoretical framework we discuss here is *feminist perspectives on education.* Feminist theorists have echoed the need to "hear" other voices in the education system, in particular women's voices, and to pay more attention to the situation of women. Much of the history of ideas is a history interpreted by men, generally white men in the European tradition. Feminists see the world from a different perspective, one that represents a sometimes forgotten element in past theoretical interpretations of education systems, one in which women were essentially denied education for most of the history of

the United States. They are still denied education in some countries of the world (see Lewis & Lockheed in Chapter 10; Spender, 1987).

While there are many branches of feminist theory, we mention several general feminist ideas that influence the understanding of schools. Early writings on gender and schooling expressed the concern that girl students and female teachers faced certain injustices. Different theorists related inequalities faced by women to differential access, different treatment and exploitation, patriarchy, and male dominance. This led to examination of educational policy and how it affected girls, women, and their future opportunities (Dillabough & Arnot, 2002). Although women have made many gains in educational attainment over the past century, many inequalities remain. As late as 1994, Sadker and Sadker found that girls were treated differently in the classroom—that girls were not called upon as often as boys and essentially not challenged as much as boys in the same classrooms. This discrepancy in classroom treatment likely contributes to lower self-esteem for girls, and it may also explain why men are more likely to enter higher-paying, more prestigious careers because women are less likely to pursue mathematics and science degrees (see the reading by Roslyn Arlin Mickelson in Chapter 7).

Not all feminist scholarship on education focuses on describing gender inequalities. Feminist theory can be used to criticize school practices, such as the assumptions that schools use to connect to parents, but actually meaning mothers, to engage in their children's educational experiences. For example, Stambach and David (2005) argue that school choice programs operate on the gendered assumption about family and employment, implying that mothers should be involved in their children's education and schools. Even today, schools in many European countries send children home for an extended lunch hour during the middle of the day, making it difficult for mothers to work full-time. Much of feminist scholarship focuses on the critical perspective at the macro level with concern about gender issues in educational environments and reproduction of gender inequality in schools. Radical feminists also link their theory to practice, as is the case with critical theorists, resulting in connections between policy and research. Thus, feminist theory and pedagogy rely on "lived experience" and concerted efforts to change the system as it exists to disadvantage women and girls.

Early feminist theories of education were criticized for having a middle-class bias and not adequately recognizing issues of concern for women of color, women from other cultures, nontraditional gender and sexual orientations, different ethnic or global identities, or political persuasions. As a result, various branches of feminist theory of education have arisen (Weiner, 1997) to address gender issues as they intersect with other categories of difference and inequality. It is expected that these multiple feminisms will result in a variety of challenges to educational practices and systems in addressing the teaching and learning experiences of all young women.

These concerns have resulted in feminist theorists struggling to understand the intersection of different categories of difference and inequality. Students are treated not solely based on gender, but also based on race and ethnicity, social class background, and other categories of difference and inequality, such as sexual orientation. These categories intersect to create complex patterns of oppression and suppression not captured by either early feminist theories or other theories discussed in this reading. For example, research by Grant (2004) finds that teachers use black girls to run errands in the classroom and, with findings similar to Ferguson (2000), that black boys are viewed by teachers as "trouble" long before they do anything wrong. Gender alone does not explain fully the experiences of children across categories of difference and inequality. Therefore, when trying to understand why Johnny can't read, we may want to consider effects of his gender and race.

Conclusion

There is a long and broad tradition of social science and sociological theories, beginning with the coining of the word *sociology* by Auguste Comte in 1838. These theories provide a range of explanations that can be used to examine issues and problems in educational systems in order to better understand the roles and activities in schools and society. All theories evolve. As described, interaction, functional, and conflict theories have gone through stages that attempted to explain the educational systems of the time and to react to previous theories that were inadequate to explain concerns of the education system. Recent trends see schools as "contested terrain" for determining curricula that meet diverse needs.

In short, different theorists help us to think differently as we attempt to explain why schools work as they do. This broad range of theories presents many alternative ways of thinking about schools and is valuable as policy makers and researchers try to find solutions to the multitude of problems plaguing education today, in both developed and developing countries.

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READING 3

Moral Education

Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) was an educator and sociologist in France, teaching at the Sorbonne. He wrote extensively on the functions of education in society, including the function of discipline for socializing the child to be a good citizen. In this reading, Durkheim provides insights into the education system, insights that guided later generations of theorists. First, he points to what he considers inevitable inequalities in educational outcomes as children come into the system from different backgrounds and exit with preparation for specialized positions in society. However, all children must learn a common base of knowledge to provide a common foundation that holds people together in society. Durkheim argues that leaders in each society have an idea of what skills and knowledge people need to develop, and education's responsibility is to help the child understand the importance of collective life. Durkheim also discusses the importance of rules, or discipline, in classrooms. If it is lacking, the class is like a "mob" of agitated students. Families are less disciplined by nature, but schools mirror adult society and prepare the young for their parts in society.

Questions to consider for this reading:

1. What is the role of discipline in schools, according to Durkheim? Does discipline serve the same function today? Explain.
2. How do schools instill discipline? Give an example.
3. What does Durkheim mean when he says we must develop the "habit" of self-control and constraint? Give an example.

From *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education* (pp. 148–151, 230–236, 277–278), by É. Durkheim, translated by E. K. Wilson and H. Schnurer, New York: Free Press.